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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted further to paragraph 25 of my last report of 1 June 1998 (S/1998/454) on the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in which I stated that it would be my intention to submit, by 15 July 1998, should the Security Council so wish, specific proposals on a possible strengthening of UNPREDEP's overall capacity, taking into consideration the situation in the region and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including 795 (1992) of 11 December 1992 and 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998.

II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

2. It will be recalled that peace and stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to depend largely on developments in other parts of the region and that recent developments in Kosovo have highlighted the danger of renewed violence in the area and the serious repercussions such violence could have upon the external and internal security of the Republic.

3. In my report to the Security Council of 2 July 1998 (S/1998/608), prepared pursuant to resolution 1160 (1998), increased concern was expressed that, unless hostilities in Kosovo are stopped, tension could spill across the borders and destabilize the entire region. I welcomed the diplomatic efforts being made at the international level to address the fundamental aspects of the situation, which can only be resolved through negotiation. Discussions are still continuing at the international level on the possible need for an expanded international military presence in the region and on the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring regime as a consequence of the situation in Kosovo.

4. Further to his letter of 15 May 1998 (see para. 22 of S/1998/454), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Blagoj Handziski, addressed a new letter to me, on 9 July 1998 (S/1998/627), reiterating his Government's recommendation for an extension of the UNPREDEP mandate for an additional period of six months, with the same mandate, structure and troop composition. The Government has endorsed the option of an eventual

increase in the military as well as in the Civilian Police components, in consultation with the national authorities. Following its meeting in Bonn on 8 July 1998, the Contact Group, in its statement on Kosovo, also supported the extension of the mandate of UNPREDEP.

5. Since the start of the Kosovo crisis, UNPREDEP has intensified patrols along the borders with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and has also established temporary observation posts for 24-hour monitoring and reporting on activities at the borders throughout its area of operation (see para. 5 of S/1998/454). The imposition of these additional tasks has come at a time when the fulfilment of UNPREDEP's existing responsibilities have already stretched the reduced strength of the operation to the limit.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

6. As stated in paragraph 21 of my report of 1 June 1998 (S/1998/454), I remain convinced that it would seem premature to proceed with a decision to withdraw UNPREDEP after 31 August 1998. Therefore, taking into account my recommendations set forth in paragraphs 7 to 9 below, the Security Council may wish to consider the extension of UNPREDEP's mandate for a further period of six months, until 28 February 1999.

7. In view of the constraints placed on UNPREDEP in monitoring and reporting on developments along the borders, referred to in paragraph 5 above, including the Kosovo stretch of the border, the Security Council may wish to consider increasing UNPREDEP's troop level by 350 all ranks. The majority of these troops, 230 in total, would be deployed at nine new permanently manned observation posts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia along the Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and Albanian borders. The troops would, in accordance with resolution 795 (1992), monitor and report on developments in the border areas, including those developments that would have a bearing on the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolution 1160 (1998).

8. A reserve of two platoons composed of approximately 60 soldiers would perform limited ground and air patrolling duties. The reserve would be centrally located and have sufficient capacity to react in a timely manner to any developments that might require immediate attention. Because of the remote positions of observation posts and the difficult terrain in the mountainous border areas, particularly during harsh winter conditions, the reserve should be complemented by a 15-man medical unit and three helicopters to enable the Force to respond promptly to emergencies involving UNPREDEP personnel.

9. In view of the important confidence-building role played by the military observer and the civilian police elements of UNPREDEP, the Security Council may also wish to consider increasing their strength by an additional twelve and twenty-four personnel respectively. The strengthened military observers and civilian police elements would intensify community and border patrols as well as monitoring and reporting of the situation at border crossing stations.

10. Should the Security Council agree to the above-mentioned increase in force levels, I will submit an addendum on the financial implications of this report as soon as possible.